

Update to Stolen VA Data:

On Thursday, June 29th, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that the stolen laptop containing the personal information of millions of veterans and military personnel had been recovered. It is a tremendous relief to have this information back in the government hands. I applaud law enforcement for their diligence on the case. [Click here for the VA's statement.](#)

I have been disappointed with the VA's handling of the incident which has revealed severe deficiencies with the VA's ability to protect and secure identifying data of our nation's veterans. It is clear that systemic IT reforms must be made.

I am a cosponsor of HR 5588 that would require the VA to provide credit monitoring services and arrange fraud alerts and security freezes for veterans affected by a data breach. In addition, the bill creates an Ombudsman for Data Security at the VA charged with assisting veterans who are the victims of a data breach. I am hopeful that the Republican Leadership will make the issue of data security at all federal agencies a priority in this year's Congressional schedule.

Stolen VA Data Reported May 22, 2006:

Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson announced today that sensitive data, including names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth for approximately 26.5 million veterans, was stolen from a VA official's home.

Law enforcement agencies are working to recover this data. The Secretary stated that each veteran will be notified that their personal information has been compromised. The potential for identity theft as a result of this breach is serious. This breach - and any lag from discovery to public revelation - must receive attention from the very top.

If you have questions about this situation, you may call toll free: **1-800-FED INFO (1-800-333-4636) from 8 am to 9 pm (EDT)**, Monday-Saturday. Updated information is also posted at <http://www.firstgov.gov/veteransinfo.shtml>

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In light of this recent admission by the VA, you may be interested in knowing that I am a cosponsor of HR 5455, the Veterans Identity Protection Act.

HR 5455 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide to affected veterans one year of free credit monitoring and one free credit report each year for two years after the end of credit monitoring (in addition to the free credit report available under the Fair Credit Reporting Act). HR 5455 would also authorize \$1.25 billion for the first year of implementation of these provisions. The VA's egregious error deserves the immediate attention of our leaders and resources to minimize the detrimental effects to our veterans.

It is concerning that the public has just been made aware of the crime, though the VA has known for over two weeks that millions of veterans identifying information had been stolen. Please be assured that I will be closely monitoring the situation to resolve this severe oversight by the VA and reduce its affects on vets across the nation.